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The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

No. 335. AUGUST, 1934.

LIFE IS. LIFE IS ONE. LIFE IS UNIVERSAL.

"The Life was manifested."—I. JOHN I., 2.

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NOTES AND NEWS.

A Convocation of Bishops of the Church of England, with two exceptions, has pronounced that Unitarians are not to be reckoned as members of a Christian Communion. That is rather a sweeping denunciation, as by implication, notwithstanding past history and declarations of faith, all congregations under the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, are included. Many of the congregations, whatever may be the present or past theology of the majority of their members, hold firmly to the original principles upon which their congregations were founded, as they have done for centuries, even before the name "Unitarian" was introduced into the English language, and they have a right to ask at what date did any such congregation cease to be "Christian"? For two years historical notes have been published in these pages, showing that some of our congregations were the earliest Presbyterian congregations in Ireland. Ballycarry is a notable instance; and that in taking their stand on "Non-Subscription" they are adhering to their ancient right to subscribe or not to subscribe to standards of faith, as they might choose, according to conscience.

* * *

What is this Church of England which assumes this dictatorial attitude towards the ancient dissenting congregations, in this twentieth century, condemning them as non-Christian, when in the days when ejected from the Church of England, such a charge was not even contemplated at a time of extreme rancour and bitterness!

A few years ago the Evangelical Free Churches of England united in a passive resistance movement, which brought many Non-Conformists to fines and imprisonment and seizure of household goods, church-wardens acting as bailiffs occasionally, in such seizures. From platforms of the Evangelical Free Church Council (from which, with the exception of Burnley, Unitarians have been excluded) we heard the creed of the Church of England summarised as being:

> "God bless the Squire and his relations,
> And keep us in our proper stations,"

and that our duty towards our neighbour was: "To order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters; to keep our hands from picking and stealing, and our tongues from evil speaking, lying and slandering."

* * *

Perhaps it may surprise Episcopalians, but it will not surprise Presbyterians, that it was in Unitarian propaganda meetings that our attention was first strongly directed to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and one of the black marks against us is that we have not subscribed, nor ever intend to subscribe, to the Nicene Creed, though we may acknowledge it to be a document that is the property of the Christian Church as a whole, as ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures may also be. It doesn't follow that we believe all that is in those manuscripts, however much we value them.

What is this Nicene Creed, before which we are asked to prostrate our minds, if not our bodies? To put the matter as briefly as possible, in the year 325 A.D., a Council of Bishops, mostly Eastern, and reckoned at 318, met at Nicea, in the North of Asia Minor, to decide on a controversy which had been started at the beginning of the century and was becoming troublesome, especially to Constantine the Roman Emperor, who was desirous of establishing Christianity as the dominant and only religion among his subjects. A deacon, Arius, who afterwards was ordained priest, had raised the question that if Christ were the only begotten Son of the Father, then **"once He was not,** that He was **inferior** to the Father, and was only **divine** in a limited sense, the word **begotten** was equivalent to **created."** The Bishopric of Alexandria had become vacant, and Arius was the unsuccessful rival for the See against Alexander. The latter with Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, suggested that the Council should be called, but few Western Bishops attended. Hosius presided, and the Emperor Constantine attended the deliberations.

* * *

The Bishop of Caesarea proposed a formal Creed, which Arius might easily have accepted, but the opponents of Arius intervened to insert clauses to contradict the doctrines of Arius, the amendments thus making it **exclusive** instead of **inclusive** of Arius, as the proposer intended. Thus were inserted **"Very God of Very God," "Not made," "Being of one substance with the Father,"** thus giving the Creed its present form, ending with the words, "and in the Holy Ghost."

* * *

Thus an old controversy, as dead as an Egyptian mummy, is resurrected with its sepulchral voice to proclaim that Unitarians are not Christians. The privilege, if privilege it be, of preaching in an English Cathedral was not solicited by Unitarians, and though Bishop David does not approve of an apology to Unitarians having been read from the pulpit of Liverpool Cathedral, such apology was needed.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS.

The one fundamental aim of the four evangelists was to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Divine Human Being foretold by the Prophets and Psalms. The programme of the end of the present age, as sketched in Mk. xiii. and parallels; the devastation of Jerusalem by foreign armies (Zech xiv. 1 ff., Dan ix., 26, xii., 1, 7) the subsequent persecution and distress, such as never had been known before, the preaching to the Gentiles by the Jews of the Dispersion, the signs in heaven and on earth, at last, the coming of the Messiah in the clouds of heaven, the new Jerusalem and the Kingdom of God, including both Jews and Gentiles. All these things had been predicted in detail by the Second Isaiah and his successors. What was seen in imagination was a spiritual revival which, originating with the Jews, and by them given its mighty impetus, should carry with it all the God-seekers in the world."—C. C. Torrey, Professor of Semetic Languages at Yale University.

SUBSIDY FUND.

Contributions should be addressed to the Manager, Rev A. Davison, Dromore, by whom they will be gratefully acknowledged.

THE DIVINE WISDOM:

"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Gal. vi. 7.

Published on the **Fourth** Saturday of the month. Copy should be in before the **19th** at the latest. Editor: Rev. John Barron, Ballywalter, Co. Down.

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The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian can be obtained at the Depository, 35 Rosemary Street, Belfast.

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It would be a great convenience if remittances now due are sent to Rev. Alfred Davison, Dromore.

REVIEWS.

Teachers' Handbook (3rd Year, Part iv.), Junior Dept., Intermediate Dept., 1/- each.—Lindsay Press.

The handbooks are continued in the style of previous ones, with blank sheets for notes, and instructions as to the use of the books. Junior has lessons on Parables of "Unprofitable Servant" and "Rich Fool," and lessons for Guides and Scouts on "Honour," "Loyalty," "Helpfulness," "Courtesy," "Friendship for Animals." Intermediate on (1) "Everyday Life," four lessons; "Mercy," "Dauntlessness," "Recreation," "Love and Loyalty;" (2) "How we got our Bible," five lessons; (3) "Whatsoever things are lovely — Pictures, Sound, Form, Words;" "Stories of Van Dyck, famous Flemish artist; Mozart, musician; Ivan Mestrovic, sculptor."

Many of our Sunday school teachers are well acquainted with previous handbooks, and the present ones keep up the standard of excellence.

"Human Personality and Future Life," by G. Dawes Hicks, M.A., Ph.D., Litt. D., Fellow of the British Academy, Emeritus Professor of Psychology of the University of London. The Essex Hall Lecture, 1934. The Lindsay Press, 1/-.

Several of our readers heard this lecture delivered, and others may have read the report of it, as well as an able review of it. Suffice it to say that this is a lecture in every way fitted to be in the noble succession of Essex Hall Lectures, and should be secured by collectors of this important series. We can imagine no more important theme to engage our thoughts than that of this lecture, for all too rapidly the future life becomes the present, and to that we cannot become oblivious. With rare genius and ability the learned author makes clear the meaning of human personality and the absolute certainty of its survival, so that the address, clear, strong, logical, affords not only bracing exercise to the mind, but the word of consolation and comfort. Our liberal faith may, on such matters, be too silent and negative as perhaps is fitting in the presence of the Great Silence. None the less, out of the Silence will come a voice, across a darkened sky, "the bolt of lightning illumines from horizon to horizon." "Now the disparity between the brevity of an earthly life on the one hand and the inexhaustible capacity for loving and tender devotion on the other is an old and well-worn theme. . . . . "In the labyrinth of earthly bereavement, when the light of our own life has fled, and the help on which we were wont to lean has fallen from our side, do we really believe it to be the last sad mission of such love to become the cause of our direct misery?" . . . Rather does even the sceptically inclined intellect feel then with Emerson that "What is excellent, as God lives, is permanent."

AN EGYPTIAN FRAGMENT.

(Circa, 2,000 B.C.).

Death is before me to-day,
Like the recovery of a sick man,
Like going out into the garden after a long illness.

Death is before me to-day
Like the fragrance of myrrh,
Like sitting under a (ship's) sail on a windy day.

Death is before me to-day
Like the scent of lotus flowers,
Like resting on the roadside to drink deep.

Death is before me to-day
Like the course of the overflowing water channel,
Like the return of a man from a ship of war to his house.

Death is before me to-day
Like the clearing of (mist from) the sky,
Like a man floating therein towards that of which he was not aware.

Death is before me to-day
As a man craves to see his home,
When he has spent long years in captivity.

(From "St. Michael's News," Huizen, Holland).

REPORTS.

Ballyhemlin—As previously announced, August 3rd is the date of Centenary of the Meeting House which was opened in 1834, by the Rev. Wm. Glendy of Ballycarry whose text was I Kings, viii, 27. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less the house that I have builded." As it is not long until the Harvest Thanksgiving, it is proposed to combine the centenary with the Harvest Festival.

Moneyrea—The Sunday School anniversary services were held on Sunday, June 24th. The meeting house was beautifully decorated by the teachers and scholars with flowers and leaves. The morning service was conducted by Mrs. J. Glynne Davies, Comber, who gave the children a delightful address, simple and very much to the point. Mrs. J. H. Ewbank officiated at the evening service and gave the young people a very impressive address, which everybody greatly appreciated. The popularity of the two lady-preachers accounted for the large attendances. At both services the children sang the anthem "Consider the Lilies." Six girls took up the collection in the morning, and six boys in the evening. All the arrangements were made by the superintendent, Miss Kennedy, assisted by Miss Dempster and Miss Doyle, and thanks are due to all concerned, for the Sunday School anniversary services have became a bigger feature than ever in Moneyrea.

All Souls Belfast—The announcement has been made, that the Rev. S. P. Whitehouse, has had the degree B.A. conferred by Queen's University. The place secured is a First Class in Philosophy. We are informed that this is only the second time in five years that a First Class has been obtained. [Ed.]

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Dr. David's Reply to Convocation of York.

The Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. David), writing in his diocesan magazine for July about the recent controversy, states :—"The Upper House of York Convocation has decided that invitations to give addresses at special services must be restricted by conditions that govern invitations to Nonconformists to preach at regular services of the church."

"As I have already stated I shall conform to this decision. In making it, however, the House found itself reluctantly, I think, compelled to declare by implication that Unitarians are not for this purpose to be reckoned as members of a Christian Communion. In this exclusion, I do not, and shall never, acquiesce."

The Bishop states, in conclusion: "It was without my concurrence that reference to this particular issue was made in the Cathedral on 17th June, and though I agree with most of what was contained in documents then read, I do not think that a Cathedral service was an appropriate occasion for their publication. I have already contradicted a subsequent unauthorised announcement which foreshadowed an agitation for amendment of Church Law in this respect. I should strongly deprecate any such movement. What we need now is a change of spiritual attitude towards other followers of Christ."

Unfortunately the genius of the Church of England for getting involved in internal controversies persists, and the storm-centre now shifts from Liverpool to the diocese of Birmingham.

In answer to anxious questions posed at the recent diocesan conference the Bishop startled the faithful by announcing that he was prepared to ordain men to the priesthood who definitely rejected the statements of the Apostles' Creed.

This raises a problem for the Anglican authorities even more serious than the use of its pulpits by ministers of another and conflicting faith.

If his lordship of Birmingham acts on his announcement it will seriously affect the character of the Church of England as a whole, for it will result in there being no certainty that its own ministers accept even the bare minimum which is required of every infant before it can be baptised in the Church —*Daily Mail.*

MORE ITEMS FROM AN OLD SCRAP BOOK

By H. J. F. Orr.

Aside from the Church notes published last month there are many interesting items and advertisements.

A list of subscribers to the Academical Institution 9th January, 1808, gives the names of some of our prominent church members. Gilbert McIlveen fifth on the list with £227 10s 0d is only one of many. Dunmurry is well represented with McCance, Hunter and Roberts. Comber by James and Thomas Andrews and William Stitt.

Hamilton Rowan of Killyleagh Castle, just returned from exile in America. John Templeton the Botanist of Malone, little did he think that a century later the School would own his fine estate, Cranmore. For many years our denomination was numerically strong on the Board of Governors but today we have only three. I am afraid this is largely due to lack of interest by those of our own people who are entitled to vote at the annual election of representative governors.

A report of the Carrickfergus assizes August, 1827, reminds us of the importance of that town in those days. The severity of sentences appeals. Two boys under ten years for entering a house with intent to steal—six months hard labour. One woman for stealing and receiving two sacks, seven years transportation; she thanked the Judge and said it was not so bad as a bad marriage.

A boy of 15 was sentenced to death for burglary, but recommended to be transported for life.

The price of the *Northern Whig* was 8d. published weekly, and the proprietor (F. D. Finlay) often personally collected from his country subscribers.

In August, 1827, Maxwell Court, Comber, is advertised for sale by private contract, interested persons to apply to Gawin Orr, Castlereagh, or Mr. John Montgomery, Belfast, Assignees. This John Montgomery was remembered for many years by "Montgomery's Market." The late Rev. Wellbeloved, minister for a time in our church at York, was connected through marriage. The present Tithe question in England was anticipated.

In 1834 a meeting was held in Comber "For the extinction of Tithes, withdrawal of Royal Bounty, Introduction of Poor Laws, and to oppose the Repeal of the Union."

In the rules for the setting of seats in the Second Congregation 1840, one reads "that a seat will become vacant on the removal o a Seat Holder and his or her family, to a distance of six miles or upwards from this town" The Seat Holder shall return the name of every sub-tenant to the Clergyman for the time being, within one month after granting such accommodation.

The seats which are held by Lease or Debenture, are considered private property, and free from general restrictions. Amongst the list of Seat Holders, are the names of Adam McClean, whose property McClean Fields, now Adelaide and Franklin Streets is most valuable. John Dunville, John Ritchie, Naven Drennan, John Millen and Joseph Patterson.

In 1846 when the Queen's College was about to be established, there seems to have been a movement to offer the R. A. Institution as a suitable site, it being pointed out the facilities for bringing the new plan into immediate operation instead of waiting until suitable buildings were erected. If this had been c rried out, we would have probably seen Belfast developing and growing in a very different direction.

In June, 1851, the Belfast and C. D. Rly., reports for one weektheir returns: Passengers 7678, £165 19s 7d. Parcels and Goods £45 3s 2d. It seems to be gradually reverting to that poor return.

A report of our church in Melbourne, 1854, is interesting—358 members, church built costing over £4000 with stipend of £400 to the Rev. M. Davidson, some £500 was subscribed at their Social, towards clearing a Debt.

It was a pleasant custom in the 50's for our country Sunday Schools to unite for a day's outing. In 1858, Comber and Killinchy joined at Sam Barry's, Ballydrain, under the care of Revs. John Orr and John McCaw, and the *Whig* reports some 300 present including some Belfast visitors and records a comfortable luncheon with unlimited quantity of lemonade, which reminds me of hearing of another outing at Scrabo when Killinchy and Ravara joined with an unhappy sequel for the Ravara children, as Killinchy was accused of taking all the lemonade, in those days considered a great treat.

In the 50's our country congregations must have been in a very flourishing condition. Crumlin had a social one December in which 450 people participated. W. Spackman of Belfast brought a choir, and it was nearly midnight when the entertainment ended.

About that time, Theodore Parker's sermons were hotly criticised by some of our ministers

in Belfast. Rev. Maginnis of York Street had allowed a layman to read one from his pulpit, Dr. Montgomery and other ministers, severely criticised him, and there was a likelihood of a serious split developing in our denomination, but happily the tension gradually lessened. Dr. Montgomery was an old man and clung to old standards of belief.

In 1859, the year of the Revival, it was discussed at some length at the Synod and Association Meetings, as our Ballymena and Templepatrick congregations were in the centre of the movement and ridiculous statements made regarding members were refuted.

Rev. John Porter of the 2nd Church at a social in 1854, told of Dr. Cooke preaching there, unfortunately he did not give date, as in view of Dr. Cook's bitter opposition to the members of Antrim Presbytery it would be of interest to know when he did occupy the pulpit.

Almost the last items in the old Scrap Book are the obituaries of Dr. Montgomery and Dr. Cooke with accounts of their funerals, a fitting close for the old volume which had so many pages concerning both ministers.

It is difficult to persuade the English and American peoples, who have been so obsessed with the necessity of making the Church to which they belong to fit in with the established scheme of things and give a good account of itself as a going concern, to realise that it may be necessary to die to live; that until a Church is prepared to stake its all—to gamble with its life after the manner of Christ—in manifesting its love and sympathy with the spiritual and social need all round it, it cannot be called Christ's disciple. Yet that is precisely what any real revival of religion will bring with it, and what the "Return of God" to His Church would mean.

Canon Guy Rogers.

Humanism, in all its branches, has been so over awed by the idea of the psychologists that God is a mere wish-fulfilment, a projection of our minds due to suggestion, that they have been blind to the fact that it is as easy to suggest to oneself that there is no God as that there is one.—"The Return to God."—Vol. i.

Give me nor ease nor goal,
  Only the Way;
A bit of bread and sleep
  Where the white waters play:
The pines, the patient stars
  And the New Day.

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PRESBYTERIAL ORDER.

Amongst Free Christians discussion often arises between the advocates of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism or some system akin to it.

The argument for Congregationalism is that it is democratic and makes for freedom. In actual fact, it works far otherwise and its strongest supporters have never claimed that it is capable of building up anything in the nature of a strong Denomination, which indeed they consider undesirable.

Under this system, or absence of system, Congregations are a law to themselves. They are almost always under the influence of a minority, whose claim to rule the Church is often that they rule outside it, or that they are the largest stipend payers. Many cases exist where an individual is humorously said to own the Meeting House. Against the ideas of this minority there is no appeal. There is no superior court. The Minister occupies a position that is often humiliating. He is held responsible for the success of the Church and blamed for its failures, yet he is refused the right of any say whatever in its management. He is openly told that he is an employee, and he may be dismissed at short notice without any adequate reason. A case could be named where a certain Church decided for some unknown reason that it would keep no Minister longer than five years. Its last Minister, a capable man and a Master of Arts, acceptable to the majority of the people, was simply given his notice when that time elapsed. It was pointed out in the official paper of the Congregationalist Church recently that the economic dependence of the Minister on his people made even the boasted freedom of utterance simply cant.

As far as the building up of a Denomination is concerned, the more powerful congregations are its chief opponents. In the words of one who was responsible for leading some of our own congregations for a time into this system we see this bluntly stated: "Why should the wealthy and inflential congregation of X.... have to pass the Call to its Minister through the hands of the Minister of a small country Church who is clerk of a Presbytery?" In this we see the whole weakness of Congregationalism. The wealthy and influential go their own way. The day comes when they are no longer wealthy and influential, and would be glad of the assistance of the very organisation which they have been foremost in making too weak to help them. Non-conformity is strewn with the wreckage of once proud Churches which haughtily refused to create any Denomination, which to-day might have nursed them and saved them as many of our Irish Churches have been saved. Even our recent history presents the spectacle of Churches which have long been a source of weakness to us and a block against our full organisation, complaining that we are not strong enough to help them should need arise, as it may. Our own experiments in Congregationalism should be a lesson to us and those who object to Presbytery and Synod because they might mean Clerical Control, though this could only happen through lay indifferences, might remember that it was a Minister who alone led the exodus and publicly declared that he would "smash" the Presbyterian system before ever he had an opportunity to understand it.

The Presbyterian system, founded on years of experience, is one of the best that can be devised, and it has received the sincerest flattery from all Denominations. Long ago Martineau advocated it for the Free Churches in England. Far from being undemocratic, it has been called the "Mother of Democracy." It not only allows freedom, but it guarantees it. Principal Gordon pointed out that it is an essential feature of the system that laymen are given equality with Ministers in every Court. There cannot be the slightest vestige of clerical control. Laymen can be and have been Moderators of Presbytery. At the same time Professor Moffatt points out the Minister is given absolute independence amongst his people. This is effected by the carefully thought-out position which the Minister is given. Congregations are free to chose, and in drastic cases change their Ministers, but while the Minister is the minister of a congregation he has dignity and security which gives him a pride in his work and a standing amongst his people. To this is due the high stand-

ing of the Presbyterian Ministry to-day, and the eagerness of the best type of men to serve in it, which has largely made the Presbyterian Church what it is. But it is not the dignity of the Ministry alone, valuable as it is to the Church, which is the main point of the system. The main point is that the Minister is both a member of the Presbytery and Moderator of the governing body of his own Church. In this way the two are linked together. A congregation can take no action without his presence as a member of Presbytery. The chance of any committee doing anything which might prove disastrous to the congregation is prevented, because the Minister cannot, like the Committee, leave the Church at a moment's notice. Chances of division in a congregation in the choice of a leader are avoided completely The leadership is placed in the hands of the one person who by his training and education is as likely to be able to lead as any layman and who in any case will be held responsible should the Church fail under him. At the same time it is laid down that the Minister can do nothing on his own authority. In any time of dispute there is an impartial court of appeal, where laymen sit on absolutely equal terms with the Ministers of the most wealthy and influential congregations. There is no power of the purse such as exists even where funds are distributed under Congregationalism. The Presbytery or Synod must pay its grants equally to all. Powerful congregations are the greatest bulwarks of the system and not its weakness. In this way a strong denomination is built up. Free congregations unite to form one united body, which is able to uphold its weaker brethren and advance the cause.

Non-Subscribers have for two centuries enjoyed this system as a birthright. Yet from time to time inovations creep in which as a result of our desire for liberty are allowed to pass. Soon they cease to be the exception and become regarded as the rule.

The entire Presbyterian system rests on the unique position given to its Ministers who are compelled to be Moderators of the governing body of their Churches. How careful our fathers were of this is to be seen in the alterations made in the code which all Ministers and congregations are sworn to maintain to secure it. The old Remonstrant code, revised in 1904, lays down that Moderators are to be elected except in Sessions, where only the Minister can be Moderator. The Non-Subscribing Code, based on this almost word for word, adds after the word Sessions the words "or Committees." The able men who drew up that Code in 1907 were aware that Sessions had ceased to function in many cases, and that the position of the Minister might be disputed, and exactly as in the case of the Orthodox Church they took steps to see that it was secured. Even had there been no Code at all the existing situation up to the time of the congregational experiment which has its memorial in Carrickfergus left no room for doubt.

In spite of this, however, a movement now exists to place the Minister in the subordinate position he occupies under Congregationalism, and it was even mooted that congregations should be asked to decide this matter. Such a step would, of course, mean the breaking of the last link with that Presbyterianism which by law we must maintain, however loosely. What the risk to our funds and properties may be is the business of legal experts. There would be other results which can be forseen by any person of intelligence and were foreseen by those who, after much care and consultation with able men, framed our Code to avoid any such disaster. The situation is alarming. What the objection to the Minister taking the place he has always taken may be, is known only to those who seek to alter the present rule. Some strange idea of Ministerial domination against which Presbyterianism is the finest guarantee, supported by the experience of two or three congregations, where under favourable circumstances some other plan has proved better, and so been allowed to continue though irregular, seem to lie behind it. Churches could be mentioned where the Minister rules without any committee, and certainly while a hundred Churches can be found which owe their existence to a Minister and bear his name as his memorial, no Church seems to exist which owes its progress to a committee. Yet this does

not indicate that Ministers should be given all authority.

We have a system admired by all who understand it. It is the result of years of evolution. It guarantees liberty to all. It has saved many of our Churches. Our Elders will do well to consider gravely before they permit it to be exchanged for what has proved to be a failure elsewhere and even amongst us, because some few do not understand it wish to see it altered.

There is no law which cannot be broken with advantage somewhere. Often it is allowed to be broken. But when the existence of the law itself is threatened Society, which has made it for the general good, arises to protect it, however it may work in individual cases. Our Code exists for the good of all our Churches. We may allow it to be broken here and there, but when its very existence is threatened, as it is to-day, we must maintain it or drift into chaos.

PRESBYTER.

KESWICK.

The Convention which began July 15th is now world-famed. We knew it at its beginning, when promoted by Canon Battersby of St. John's, Keswick, and Mr. Robert Wilson, of Broughton Grange, Cockermouth. Then it was only intended to be for the one occasion, but so successful did it prove to be that it has been repeated every year since, and instead of a small tent holding three or four hundred, now about five thousand attend from all parts of the world. What distinguished the Convention was that it was held for "the promotion of 'practical' holiness.

The term "practical" was new in connection with Evangelical movements, whose primary object was "conversion." As aiding the "practical" object, those attending were urged to "lay aside for the time all reading except the Bible, to avoid conversation which has a tendency to draw the mind to other subjects, eat moderately, dress simply, retire to bed early." A splendid discipline for a week, which none of us would be the worse for trying. A lasting impression was made on us in early life, when chancing to be at the entrance to the tent just after the singing of the Doxology at the close of an early morning service, two dignified gentlemen came out, an elderly gentleman and a younger, and the older one quietly remarked, "It's a glorious reality." The "reality," whatever the form "orthodox" or "liberal," in either case, is the same, and the witness was the everlasting hills around and the glory of the sunrise. ULLIN.

CHURCH COURTS.

Living in a community which is largely Presbyterian, it is much easier to understand and to appreciate the system of Presbyterianism, than it is in England, where until the early years of the previous century a Presbytery was illegal on English soil, although congregations which were remnants of the Puritan supremary in England, during the Commonwealth, still survived, which retained the name Presbyterian. Church Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and in case of a large denomination General Assembly, constitute the Presbyterial order. Church Sessions consist of elders, of whom the minister is teaching elder, and ex-officio Moderator of the Session. The session is supplemented for the business of the congregation, by managers, who with the session together form the committee. We learn from "The British Weekly" that a remarkable approach by a group of eminent Anglicans to the non-Episcopal churches in a manifesto, has been "told off" by a chilling leading article in "The Times," which has evoked the question "Was that article inspired from Lambeth?" In his address, recently to his diocesan conference the Archbishop of Canterbury deprecated any attempt to weaken the testimony of the Church of England to the historic episcopate, which to him is "analogous to the Canon of Scripture and the Creeds." In the Archbishop's view it is only by the acceptance of Episcopacy, and not otherwise, that Church Union can be achieved in Great Britain. Negotiations for closer union between the Churches of England and Scotland have broken down.

THE DESTINY OF A SERMON.

Over two hundred years ago, two hundred and fourteen years, to be exact, there was a Sermon preached in our Meeting House of the First Presbyterian Congregation, Belfast, which is almost as religiously revolutionary as R. W. Emeron's "Divinity School Address" of more than a century later in America. Has any single Sermon preached in Ireland created so much difference of opinion with such far reaching effects as "Religious obedience founded on Personal Persuasion" from the text "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, on December 9th, 1719, by Rev. John Abernethy of Antrim? Having quietly re-read these two famous Sermons we seem to catch their soliloquy—"Thought is another name for fate, choose now thy destiny and wait." As might be expected John Abernethy's views created alarm. The next meeting of Synod in 1720 started a series of debates lasting over a period of seven years, leading in 1726 to the ejection of seventeen ministers, who formed themselves into a separate body known ever since as "The Presbytery of Antrim." The history of the debate over that Sermon is unquestionably interesting, especially to us who hold that sermon is the Magna Charter of our Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

The dispute, let it be remembered, was not on points of doctrine, it was on imposing human decisions touching Divine Truths, as tests of orthodoxy, even when the tests were admitted by both parties to be proper.

Read now by the light of modern reflection and inquiry, this Sermon must be viewed by all impartial minds, as a production of wonderful ability and sound reasoning. The preacher contended that the whole fabric of religion rests on the way in which the reason of man interprets the decrees of Providence, he admits of no restriction that tends to limit the right of private judgment, but asserts that every man's persuasion of what is right and true is the sole rule of faith and conduct —"that there is no culpability in error arrived at after a deliberate and impartial investigation of the truth; that it is in the highest degree unjust and unscriptural to exclude from christian fellowship any who walk according to their persuasion, no matter how they may differ in opinion from the church, and that all doctrines are non-essential, in which human reason and christian sincerity permit men to differ."

Following that advice our forefathers drew up a proposal for christian unity (which is the basis of our present constitution)—refusing all doctrinal tests as terms of communion for either minister or member, maintaining that all christians who comply with Christ's terms as recorded in the New Testament, have a right by the Gospel Charter to be received into religious fellowship; every man being left free to judge for himself according to his best light what are the terms enjoined by the Gospel. Has not God laid upon us a mighty trust—a united endeavour to beget and confirm this lofty and noble principle? "Let every man enjoy the freedom of following the light of his conscience, and no christians carry their zeal for agreement so far, as to break in upon the essential condition of our title to God's favour, which is acting sincerely according to the inward conviction of our minds." "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart; then, give me thy hand."—G.V.C.

DOMESTIC MISSION.

We have received from Mrs. Slipper, Newry, widow of the Rev. G. J. Slipper, an enlarged photo of her late husband for the Mission. The Management Committee and mission members are gratified for this most appropriate gift, and will treasure it, in remembrance of one whose successful work in the mission is still bearing fruit. The memory of Rev. G. J. Slipper is still fragrant and abiding in the hearts of all those to whom he ministered so devotedly.

Under the auspices of the Boy's Club, an outing for all the senior boys of the Sunday School has been arranged for Saturday afternoon, 21st July. The teachers and boys will have a motor run to the country where refreshments will be served.

During the absence of the Missioner in August, there will only be one service each Sunday at 7 p.m.

Mr. F. M. Pett will have charge of the evening services, and should any occasion arise requiring the services of a minister the Rev. J. H. Ewbank, B.A., B.D., 20 Sydenham Gardens, Belfast, has kindly arranged to take charge.

About sixty members and friends enjoyed the mystery motor-tour arranged by the Debating Circle on June 29th. A beautiful evening and charming scenery en-route together with good fellowship all contributed to the joy of the outing. The route followed was Newtownards, Woodburn, Millisle, Donaghadee returning by Bangor.—W.E.

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